

HB 680 -- ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Fitzwater (49)

This bill establishes three adult high schools to be operated by a Missouri nonprofit organization. An "adult high school" is defined as a school for an individual who is at least 21 years old without a high school diploma, offers industry certification programs that include a high school diploma and provides on-site child care for students.

This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to grant a license to a Missouri-based nonprofit organization before January 1, 2018, to establish and operate three adult high schools with locations as specified in the bill. Currently, these areas are St. Louis City, Butler County or contiguous counties, Christian County or contiguous counties, and Boone County or contiguous counties.

The license will be granted by a bid process conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations governing purchasing through the Office of Administration.

The bill specifies the requirements for a successful bid. The requirements include:

- (1) Demonstrating the ability to establish three adult high schools within 21 months of receiving the license;
- (2) Committing a minimum of \$2 million in investment for the necessary infrastructure to operate the three schools;
- (3) Demonstrating substantial and positive experience in providing services, including industry certifications and job placement services, establish a partnership with a state-supported postsecondary education institution, if necessary;
- (4) Establishing a comprehensive plan for how each adult high school will help address the need for a sufficiently trained workforce in the surrounding region for each adult high school and establish partnerships and strategies for engaging the community and business leaders in carrying out the goals of each adult high school;
- (5) Establishing the ability to meet quality standards through certified teachers and programs;
- (6) Creating a plan for assisting students in overcoming barriers; and

(7) Establishing a process for determining the outcomes of the adult high school.

This bill requires DESE to work with the successful bidder to assess the specific requirements for a student to obtain a high school diploma. The requirements must be based on an adult student's prior high school achievement and the remaining credits and coursework required for the student to receive a high school diploma if he or she were in a traditional high school setting. An adult student shall meet the requirements with the same level of academic rigor as would otherwise be necessary, at his or her own pace and as available from the school.

The bill specifies that DESE shall award high school diplomas to adult students who successfully complete the requirements and the diploma will be indistinguishable from a traditional high school diploma. This bill allows an adult student to complete required coursework at his or her own pace and as available through the adult high school. The bill prohibits DESE from creating additional regulations or burdens on the adult high school or an adult student beyond certifying necessary credits and ensuring that a student has sufficiently mastered the subject matter to make him or her eligible for credit.

This bill requires admission preference be given to a student who receives any local, state, or federal assistance in which a person or family is required not to exceed a certain income level in order to qualify for the assistance.

The bill species that an adult high school shall not receive funding from the foundation formula established under Section 163.031, RSMo, and will not receive any local funding that is intended to benefit traditional public schools in the state. An adult high school may receive funding from public or private sources, including from the nonprofit organization operating the adult high school. If the school receives funding from a public source it must operate in a manner that does not violate the provisions of Article IX, Section 8, or Article I, Section 7, of the Missouri Constitution or the first amendment of the United States Constitution.

The nonprofit organization operating the school must ensure that the school is funded to operate year-round and set the following outcome expectations:

- 1) Each year, at least 75% of the school's students shall graduate or continue working toward a high school diploma or an industry certification;

2) At least 50% of the school's graduates shall attain an industry certification or enroll in higher education or more advanced skills training within six months of graduation;

3) At least 85% of the school's graduates who do not enroll in higher education or more advanced skills training shall be employed within six months of graduation; and

4) The school's graduates who enter the workforce shall earn, on average, a wage at least 20% greater than the average Missouri wage rate for individuals without high school diplomas.

The licensed nonprofit organization shall submit an annual report to DESE, as described in the bill and DESE shall submit the report to the Joint Committee on Education and the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President Pro Tem of the Senate before December 1, each year.